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WHAT THE "WHY" WAS

By R. B. SHELTON.

McPhee walked down to the car with the eminent surgeon. McPhee was plainly worried. As they reached the big limousine and the surgeon was about to step in, McPhee laid a hand on his arm.

"You're not satisfied with the way he's coming on, are you?" he said boldly, with a backward nod of his head towards the rough little shack on the hillside.

The surgeon looked at him narrowly. "No, I'm not," he said simply.

McPhee scowled. "What'll we do?"

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders. "Then he got into the car."

"I'll be over again this afternoon," he said.

He nodded to his chauffeur. The car went spinning towards Renford in a great cloud of dust.

Across the hills came the whirr of pneumatic drills and the squeal of cranes and the puffing of donkey engines. McPhee knew he should be over at the tunnel. Every minute of his time was precious, but instead of going over to the works, he trailed up the hills to the little cluster of comfortable looking camps. On the porch of one sat a sallow young man wrapped in blankets. Beside him was the orderly the surgeon had brought out from the hospital.

"Oh you Billy Crail!" called McPhee, trudging up the rough path. "You're looking a pile better this morning. I'm coming to call."

"It's a pity I ever got out alive," he grunted.

"You don't mean you're a quitter?" said McPhee with lifted brows.

"Not generally," said Billy. "Just now--well, maybe I am."

"Why?" said McPhee.

Billy was silent.

"He never asks how things are getting on," thought McPhee. "He doesn't care about anything. This isn't like him. There's a why to it somewhere. I wonder what the why is."

Aloud he said, as a car puffed up to the foot of the hill: "Hello, here's the doctor back. Or, no it isn't either. He's in a limousine. Who's getting out? By George, a woman!"

Someone was running up the hill, a girl, young, lithe, eager. Her long veil streamed out behind her; she was stripping off her gloves as she came.

There was a cry from Billy Crail, a queer, childish, broken cry. He hilt rose from his chair, the chair he had not left without help for weeks and weeks.

The girl gained the porch. She seemed not to see either McPhee or the orderly there. Her eyes were for the stricken man.

"Billy!" she cried. "Oh, Billy, Billy!"

Then she sank down her head on his knees.

"I've come. I ran away. We just got back on the Polina. I didn't know about the accident until then. And I didn't know what--what we meant to each other until I heard you might die. Oh, Billy!"

Billy Crail's voice came, very unsteadily. "Was he with you?"

"The marquise? Yes. I ran away from him, too."

"It said in a paper--a paper I saw last week that you were to be married today."

"I am."

"You are?"

"Surely. To you, Billy."

"You are going straight back there," said Billy Crail faintly, but with an evident attempt at firmness.

"Of course I am. And you're going with me. We'll go straight back to get their forgiveness."

McPhee suddenly came to his senses. He tiptoed backward, off the porch and down the hill. But he had not gone a hundred yards when Billy Crail's voice hailed him. He looked back. There--miracle of miracles--was Billy Crail standing erect on the porch edge. He was making a trumpet of his hands.

"Oh, McPhee!" he yelled. "Bring my fuds over from your camp. My decent things are all in the trunk there. Bring them a-running, will you?"

At five the limousine of the eminent surgeon stopped at the foot of the hill. McPhee met him. McPhee was all agnir. The eminent surgeon liked that. McPhee had not grinned that way since the accident to Billy Crail.

"How's the patient?" said the surgeon. "Better, I take it from your looks."

He turned and looked at the porch. It was quite empty.

"Good Lord, McPhee, where's the patient?" he gasped.

McPhee took him by the arm.

"Get in," he said, pointing to the limousine.

Myatified the surgeon entered. McPhee followed. He leaned forward to whisper grinningly to the chauffeur before he closed the door.

They sped away, across the bare hills, away from the noise of the tunnel work, to the first little village just beyond. They stopped at a little ivy-covered church, beside which nestled an ivy-covered rectory. McPhee got out and beckoned to the surgeon.

They tiptoed to an open window of the church and took off their hats.

"You know you said there must be a why to his slowness in coming back after the accident. Well, that's it," said McPhee.

"And he's marrying it!" grinned the surgeon.

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Blue of the Sky.
Oxygen is not colorless, but of a pretty blue color, even in a layer of slight thickness. Liquid air has a bluish tint increasing in depth with the proportion of oxygen. While it is not certain that a body has the same color in a solid as in the gaseous state, it is nevertheless true that this at once suggests an explanation of the phenomenon of the blue color of the sky.—Scientific American.

Fire Set by Mirror.
A piece of mirror that had been thrown away set fire to some grass in the yard of J. B. Crow and the fire crept up and caught in his house. The mirror had been broken in moving and the glass was all taken out and dumped with a pile of tin cans, old shoes and similar junk in a low place about 70 feet from the house. One piece of the mirror was exposed so that it caught the rays of the sun.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

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